E
458
.3
G64

Class E458
Book .G64 .3

THANKSGIVING SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE

UNION SERVICE OF THE

FIRST & SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES,

NEW BRITAIN, CONN.,

NOVEMBER 26, 1863.

BY REV. C. L. GOODELL,

PASTOR OF SOUTH CHURCH.

HARTFORD:
PRESS OF CASE, LOCKWOOD & COMPANY.
1863.

THANKSGIVING SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE

UNION SERVICE OF THE

FIRST & SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES,

NEW BRITAIN, CONN.,

NOVEMBER 26, 1863.

BY REV. C. L. GOODELL,

PASTOR OF SOUTH CHURCH.

HARTFORD:
PRESS OF CASE, LOCKWOOD & COMPANY.
1863.

LE 468
.3
.G64

New Britain, Nov. 28th, 1863.

Rev. Mr. Goodell,

Dear Sir:—The undersigned, having listened, with much satisfaction, to your excellent discourse on Thanksgiving day, and believing that its circulation among our citizens and our soldiers, will prove beneficial, most respectfully request of you a copy for the press. Allow us to add that we believe we represent the general feeling of those who had the pleasure of hearing the discourse alluded to.

Very truly,

Your friends,

F. H. North,	Henry Stanley,
Chas. Peck,	Oliver Stanley,
H. G. Brown,	Chas. Northend,
J. N. Bartlett,	P. Corbin,
C. A. Warner,	James Stanley,
L. F. Judd,	W. Gladden,
Wm. H. Smith,	T. W. Stanley.

New Britain, Dec. 3d, 1863.

Messrs. F. H. North,

Chas. Peck, and others;—

Gentlemen:—The sermon which you courteously ask for publication was prepared for the public service on Thanksgiving day. But if you judge further good may be done by printing it, the manuscript is at your disposal.

I am respectfully,

Yours,

C. L. Goodell.

SERMON.

DEUTERONOMY, 26 : 19.

"And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor, and that thou mayest be a holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken."

This day of National Thanksgiving is like a watch-tower of the ancient Hebrews, into which the prophets ascended to read the signs of the times, and to receive the solemn vision of God. We have laid aside the ordinary cares of life, and come up to Mount Zion, that our minds may be illumined by the Infinite Light, and our hearts led in the way of holiness and truth.

It is always the misfortune of those who live in perilous times, that they do not realize the great interests at stake. Standing in a forest, we forget that the little springs at our feet, are rolled onward into mighty rivers. Surrounded by the clouds and darkness of war, we become absorbed in petty temporary interests, and blind to the vast issues involved. This day affords a high outlook, that with consecrated heart and purged eye, we may forget ourselves, and see afar.

And first of all may the voice of praise rise from our lips, and the incense of thanksgiving ascend from our hearts, to Almighty God from whom all blessings come. Let us bless Him for healthful seasons, for abundant harvests, for the means of knowledge, for social blessings, and for religious liberty. Let us thank God for comfortable homes, for holy

affections, for the lessons and disciplines of faith, and for the hopes of immortality.

Let us rejoice and praise God, that in the midst of war, He has granted us so many mercies, and that, notwithstanding our grievous sins, He has given us so many assurances of final victory, and a righteous peace. O Thou Eternal! let our hearts rise higher than all interests that entangle, than all doubts that bewilder, than all passions that ensnare, than all prejudices that obscure; that we may be the willing instruments in Thy hands, in the establishment of righteousness, justice and truth in the earth.

To those accustomed to read the providences of God, His hand seems scarcely less manifest in the planting and training of this nation, than in that of the Hebrew; consequently the words of our text addressed to the Israelites, in an important sense, may be applied to us. It was the Divine purpose to make this nation high among all nations which he hath made, in name and in praise and in honor, that we might be a holy people unto the Lord as he hath spoken.

In the light of this truth, let us reflect upon the moral worth of our Federal Union, and our consequent duty to preserve it.

Where shall we find the measure, with which to estimate this fair heritage of our Fathers? If any man judge of a government by the "good things of this life" which it secures, where can one be found, which has conferred so many favors, and distributed them so equally? If any would value a government according to the general peace and happiness it is fitted to give, on what nation does the sun shine, which, in this respect, surpasses ours? Going higher, if any would regard "the life as more than meat," and government as the guardian of liberty, and the handmaid of advancing civilization, what nation is better adapted to the work than ours?

1. The value of our Federal Union may be judged of, by considering the extent of the preparation which preceded it.

You might have learned something of the character of Solomon's temple, by visiting the quarries in the mountains

where the material was preparing before a stone was laid. So you may gauge the value of our institutions, by studying the old despotisms which gave rise to them. The kingdoms of Europe have been the workshops of republicanism for centuries. The material for our temple of liberty was preparing, long before the site for its location was discovered. It was indeed put up on these shores, at last, in a day, without the sound of saw or hammer. But it was not a hasty work, entered into without consideration, and conducted without wisdom. Every stone had been carved in the mountains of the Old World, and brought carefully over the sea. In spirit and essence, no government is so old as ours. Into none have entered such ages of preparation, and such treasures of wisdom and experience.

Your grape-vines thrive best on old decayed bones. The vine which God brought out of Egypt and planted here, sends its roots to the brain of Milton and Hamden, of Plato and Moses, and draws nourishment from all the past. The names of our towns are taken from every great historic nation. We have a Hebron, an Athens, a Corinth, a Rome, a Paris, a Manchester and London. So our civilization is a golden braid, each age furnishing its tested strand, and all together, combining what is best, and excluding what is worst, in the experience of man.

Those who came first to our shores to begin their work, were like the three hundred men of Gideon, twice sifted from their fellows; each a tried man, standing in his place, with a light in his hand, which was as the lamp of God, with no pitcher to hide it.

No one can properly understand the worth of this nation, who does not study these marked Providences in the currents of history, pointing toward it, and preparing for it. Astronomers often notice the purturbations of a planet, yet see no disturbing cause. By and by, an orb, new to science, sweeps into the field of vision, and the mystery is solved. An unseen world is found to have reached out its mystic arms through the spaces, and rocked the foundations of a neighboring sphere. So the disturbances in the Old World—

among things civil, religious and scientific, from Columbus to Newton—can be explained only by the fact that God was making preparation for the New World, which, rising up out of the sea, was even then playing into the Old, and shaping its affairs by an invisible hand. To set the train in motion, Columbus discovered a new hemisphere, and opened fresh channels of commerce for the nations. Galileo poised his glass to the stars, and told the Pope that the world did move, thus giving a new impulse to science. Faust invented the printing-press, and placed the torch of learning in the hands of the common people. Luther struck the fetters from the Bible, and changed the basis of ecclesiastical governments. Calvin conceived of free institutions modeled after the simplicity of the primitive church, and formed a party whose battle-ground was Germany and England, and whose refuge was the New World. Oliver Cromwell snatched the scepter of civil government from the grasp of arbitrary power—and failing to place it in the hands of the people, passed it over the sea. And all this, that a free government might be administered here, by an enlightened, Christian people, over a territory, wide as the ocean over which Columbus sailed.

A nation commencing its career with a preparation like this, must be valued as an instrument in the hand of God for the accomplishment of great ends. We have no right to treat it lightly. We can not shut our eyes to its mission. God has set a sacred impress upon it which we must respect.

2. The moral value of our Federal Union may be seen from its geographical position and its combination of the great historic forces of civilization.

God has established here a fresh and independent center of Christian influence. When Columbus first discovered this continent, he regarded it as simply a new way to the Old World; the New, in his judgment, was to be only a tributary to the Old. So thought all the nations of Europe. They refused to believe that God had purposes which reached beyond them, and that he could remove his candlestick from Europe to America, as he had already, from Asia to Europe. Spain regarded the New World as a vast gold mine for her

material aggrandizement. England looked upon it as a dependency, ministering to her love of wealth and power. Until awakened by the thunder of Saratoga and Yorktown, she never admitted that there was anything absurd in a continent's being governed by a little island, three thousand miles away. But God is wiser than man. It was not destined that America should be Europe over again, and nothing more. This continent did not come upon the arena of modern history, to give England a cotton plantation—Ireland a potato field—France a glove market—Austria a throne for its hungry princes, and Africa a gigantic slave-pen. The New World was ordained in the providence of God, to have its new government, its new man, and its new and important mission among the nations of the earth. Civilization never repeats itself—its watchword is "onward." There has been but one Jerusalem—but one Athens and Rome. It were not possible, even if it were desirable, to build another England, or France, or Spain, on this side of the Atlantic. Every great emigration results in a distinctive civilization, unlike that in which it had its origin. Greece received emigration and arts from Egypt, but Greece was not like Egypt; it was a new and living power. Rome was also colonized by the Greeks, but Rome differed from Athens as much as Athens from Thebes. England was peopled by the Teutonic stock; England, however, is not a copy, but an original, with a character and mission of its own. No more is America the counterpart of Europe from which it sprung; it is a new creation, breathing a divine life, and raised up for especial service. This nation was not designed to be, can not be, like anything which history has produced in the Old World. Providence does not go backward. You can not nail to-day into the coffin of yesterday, neither can you bind the spirit of American liberty with the shackles of past centuries, nor cramp its expanding powers into the old forms of decaying despotisms. It must develop itself according to its own law, and adjust its institutions to its peculiar wants and necessities. We have already regarded ourselves as an outlying province of the Old World too long. Our political in-

dependence has indeed been achieved, but we need a second emancipation ; and this war is securing it. When England and France turned away from us, we whimpered at first, like an overgrown child—but we shall be led thereby to assert an independent manhood. The sooner we think our own thoughts, and go our own ways, accepting the destiny assigned us, and laboring in the freshness and vigor of a distinct and newly created life, the better for us. Henceforth we shall no more look over the sea for our precepts and examples, but upward to Him who has thus far led us, and onward to our field of labor. And it is interesting to see how God, who anticipates the direction of the great movements of civilization, and raises up nations purposely fitted to stand at the centers of influence as instruments for the accomplishment of His purposes, has given to this nation a geographical position, and a territorial greatness and wealth as much surpassing all other nations as its civil institutions are in advance of the age. Time has proved that Europe, which was thought to be the center, is only a way station in the march of civilization to the New World. Our nation occupies an area as large as a dozen European dynasties. The whole of Great Britain might be easily submerged in our northern lakes, and in all the physical resources which constitute a great nation, and put it in control of the keys of a world-wide power, it never has had, and never can have an equal. To give a single illustration—a committee recently reported in the Parliament of Great Britain, that by extending the Grand Trunk Railway to the Pacific, England might reach China and her dependencies in the East, nineteen days sooner than by her present route ; and the prediction was ventured, that soon the vast commerce between India and Western Europe, would pass through America, in this way increasing its population, and magnifying its prospective importance a hundred fold. Thus God has placed us as a light at the conjunction of the great streams of influence. The world's highways meet and cross here, and for generations to come, those who occupy these seats of privilege will be called upon to perform the work of a free and enlightened Christian nation. What Germany was to the

cause of pure religion in the sixteenth century—what English liberty was to Christian civilization in the seventeenth century—that, and more, the Federal Union now is to the world. And what is this but the measure of the moral worth of our institutions? God may not love us, nor care to save us for ourselves; but for the sake of our posterity and the great future into which the boundaries of his kingdom run, he will establish the integrity, and secure the freedom, and maintain the honor of this nation. Who doubts it? The workmen indeed die, but the work goes on. Shall we, starting thus on a new career, with the sunlight of a golden future on our foreheads, turn back to confederacies and despotisms? to feudal aristocracies and slavery? No! God forbid! This lurid light of war, which flashes along the sky, is not the funeral pyre of American liberty, but the dawning glory of her immortal youth.

3. The moral worth of our Federal Union is seen in the principles it embodies. A nation's worth depends upon the value of the truths it holds up to the world, and its ability and determination to maintain them. The province of Egypt is worth just what the principle of an absolute despotism is worth to the cause of humanity. A nation founded on slavery would be worth all that the doctrine of oppression is worth to the cause of Christian civilization in this age. And God evidently sets no higher value upon it now, than when he swallowed up Pharoah and his host in the Red Sea.

In every age, some one nation has occupied the advance in the struggle for civil and religious liberty. Two centuries ago, the service which England performed for the world, was beyond all computation. Oliver Cromwell spake, and religious liberty took heart throughout Europe. But that position is being taken from her and given to America. That which now promises to accomplish most for the good of man is represented by our Union. Bring before you, for the purposes of thanksgiving and praise, the principles of which our nation's flag is the symbol and hope.

Our government gives every citizen the right to become the owner of soil, and thus restores to the world the old doctrine

which God gave to the Jews. A free soil is nature's Magna Charta of liberty and virtue. Take away this right, and you establish an aristocracy by which you entail upon one class dangerous wealth and power, and upon another hopeless oppression, poverty and toil. It has been the device of tyranny in all ages, to wrest the soil from the common people, for it carries with it liberty and independence, and all the rights and privileges of citizenship. Here, the land is free to every man ; none so poor as to be shut out from the benefits it confers. The widow may keep her cow ; no land-holder can take it for rents. The poor man may possess the heritage which God gave him—a free soil—and build his castle thereon, and rear his children in contentment and peace, and while the old flag waves over him, no one, not even Ahab the king, can eject him save for mismanagement of his own. This fact is the source of untold strength and encouragement to the poor. It binds a man to his country, gives him weight and stability of character and incites just and laudable ambition.

Our government honors free labor. It is the only country in the world, where the child of poverty and toil may be honored and respected as a man, and where the lowest classes have equal opportunity with the highest, to rise to every civil station in the land. Poverty excludes no man from respectability. There is no barrier to check the advancement of the humblest child in all this vast republic. What he chooses, that he is as free to aspire to, by honorable competition, as any of his fellows. In the old world, there is little hope for the poor. Rank is privileged, and has secured to itself wealth and power, and hereditary right by law. Poverty is hedged in on every hand, and is forced to grind hopelessly on, in the prison-house of toil. These truths are as familiar to you as household words. But in a time like this, when the foundations of our government are shaken, it is well for us to review them and reassert their worth. What poor man can look up to the flag of his country, and think what it secures to him and his posterity, and not shed tears of gratitude to Almighty God! While it waves over him he is a MAN. No arbitrary power can take away his rights. He is free to fill up

the measure of his manhood, and to eat without molestation, the fruit of his toil.

Our government also encourages popular education. There is no monoply of learning here. By a law of the land, a free school is opened near every man's door, and his children are invited to enter and take into their own hands, the keys of knowledge and power. Ignorance has been the fruitful source of oppression and wrong in all ages. The few have sat in the seats of learning, and excluded the many, holding them in a bitter and degrading bondage. Here the genius of our free schools lifts up every child at its birth, and places it in the highway to usefulness and honor. In England, the common working man must entail his poverty and ignorance upon his child. In America, while he toils, his labor is sweetened by the thought that his children are at school, fitting for a position to which he could never attain. And while this Federal Union is preserved, such may be the solace of every obscure and humble man. Our common schools are educating to day, five millions of rising freemen. The one hundred and twenty colleges dotted over our land, have graduated thirteen thousand men, and are annually sending out an army of three thousand, skilled in all valuable learning, for the great work of the age. Who can estimate the worth of a nation which is accomplishing a work like this?

Our Federal Union honors civil liberty. After generations of conflict, a government has been founded under which man, in the highest and best sense, can be FREE. Oh! how sweet that word sounds. Liberty—Liberty—speak it out, no man can harm you! Liberty!—let it ring through every valley. Liberty!—let it sound from ocean to ocean. For ages, men have tasted it in the air, have smelt it in the mountains—have heard its music in the leaping rills, and have been forced to bow down to chains and slavery, and to die with the worm of despotism gnawing at their vitals. But here, while the banner of our country floats over us, we are FREEMEN. There are none to question our rights. This one boon which our Union confers "without money and without price," has cost the world more lives than the Union now contains. For it,

Europe has been lighted up with the fires of martyrdom, and her prisons filled with the bravest and noblest of earth. For it, her scaffolds have been stained with gore, and her battle-fields have drank of human blood like the Spring rain. And shall we place no value upon civil liberty now? Shall we hold that Constitution and Union which secure it, as of little moral worth? Shall we let that flag which represents it, be torn down by traitorous hands? The response is "Oh! the sacrifice—Oh! the blood it will cost." And none can feel more deeply than I do, the weight of that sorrow which presses upon the countless broken households of our land. But is it the brave and suffering soldier who complains, or those who, refusing to lend their aid, remain at home to find fault? If men can not shed blood for freedom, and make sacrifice for principle, they are born in the wrong age, and belong to the wrong nation. Those who are now upholding the flag of our country, came of a race, who for centuries have dared to suffer for truth, and even have counted it sweet to die for liberty. And now when "the sons of God" are called together for one more struggle in behalf of the "good old cause," if any are found among them counseling otherwise, it is because Satan has come also. I know some will say this nation, as a whole, has not honored liberty. I grant it; and the thought makes my blood tingle with shame to my fingers ends. But I hope. Into a field in the South of England, a refuse mill stone was thrown. Up through the hole in the centre, shot an oak; it grew till it filled the hole and raised the stone up with it, some inches from the ground. The problem was, whether the stone would burst asunder, or the tree would die. At length, in a storm which tried every fibre of the trunk, the stone gave way, and the oak lived. Slavery has hung like a mill-stone around our tree of Liberty, threatening to destroy it, till the hearts of good men have sunk within them. But this war *has cracked the stone*, and now the grand old tree, rising loftier than before, bids fair to brave the storms of a thousand winters. Our flag to day, thank God! means Liberty! And Slavery—to change the figure—will find this stone with which it sought to overthrow the

Union, hanging around its own neck, till it is sunk, like Milton's rebel angels, ten thousand fathoms deep

"In adamantine chains and penal fire;"

and the nations of the earth, beholding, shall shout Alleluia! while the smoke of its torment ascendeth up forever and ever.

Thus the most cursory view makes it evident, that our Federal Union is the pledge of those principles which are dearest to the heart of man. Its value to every one who loves the cause of humanity is above all price. It embodies, doubtless, in greater purity than any other government, all those active forces of Christian civilization, which are placing this age in advance of the past, and this nation, in the forefront of the present; hence the battle shock which has come upon us. Had the moral sentiment of this nation been like that of Spain for instance, we might have lived in peace. The Constitution of our country, interpreted according to the spirit of its founders, is the best fruit which the cause of civil liberty has thus far borne. The Declaration of Independence touched the "high water mark" of the eighteenth century; the Proclamation of Emancipation, by President Lincoln, has reached the highest point in the nineteenth. Should this nation go down, man, as man, would lose half the sacredness of his personality. What check would there be upon arbitrary power? What hope for the poor and oppressed?

It is evident therefore, men and brethren, that in exact proportion to the moral worth of this Union, is our duty to uphold it. If its value seems to grow upon us, defying computation, so also does the obligation to preserve it. The poor man loves his home, however humble, and will defend it, for it is his all. Shall we have an inheritance like this, given to us, and when rebel hands are rending it from us, turn away with indifference? Be not deceived as to the nature of this conflict. If this Union goes down it will never rise again. If we would continue to be, what, from our infancy has been our joy and pride—American citizens—we must act the man in this crisis of our country's history. The men who oppose this government will never yield till their sword arm is para-

lyzed. They threw themselves into this war, knowing, as one of their prominent leaders confessed, that they were "candidates for the halter;" and they will not pause in their course of demolition and ruin, till this national government is leveled in the dust.

A slave vessel carrying four hundred negroes kidnapped in Africa, to the southern market, was confronted on the ocean by a man-of-war. The captain of the slaver ordered the negroes to be brought up and tied, one by one, to a long rope running round the deck, and fastened to a great weight. When it became evident that there was no escape from the man-of-war, the captain ordered the weight to which the negroes were tied, to be thrown into the sea, and thus with a gurgling groan, four hundred human beings went down to death. The rebel leaders have, in like manner, bound together the foundation principles of our Union—liberty, justice, law, order and truth—all that we love for its past service, and delight in for its future promise—and cast them overboard, determined that rather than yield one iota, they shall all perish together in the hell of rebellion. The rescue must be as quick and decisive, as the attack is bold and desperate. Days must perform the work of months, and months accomplish the mission of years. Already great results have been achieved. The news which comes over the wires to-day, from Gen. Grant, near Chattanooga, inspires fresh confidence and hope. Another battle fought! Another victory won! But much remains to be done.

In girding ourselves once more however to meet our present duties, we do not need to be pointed to the history of other nations for heroic examples. Our own history abounds in incidents of lofty heroism and sacrifice. Do you recall Bunker Hill and Lexington? Do you remember the blood that crimsoned the snow at Valley Forge? Those frozen, bleeding feet were your fathers'! What nation can point to a brighter record? And shall not the sons be worthy of their sires? Coming nearer home—have you forgotten our last national holiday, when the news of a two-fold victory came—telling what your husbands, brothers and sons had

achieved at Gettysburg, and on the Mississippi? How grandly the stars shone out that night! The earth put on a mantle of glory; the air was stung into melody by the whispers of invisible spirits foretelling the grand hour of universal liberty. Now, after all this toil, and suffering, and sacrifice, bringing us to the very gates of victory, and opening the folding doors to a wider liberty, and a purer and firmer government, shall it be said that we, with such an end full in view, faltered and paused? No, never! He who counsels this, forgets God. The work will go on.

A German baron constructed a vast wind-harp, by stretching a cable from his castle turret to the mountain side beyond. There were those who jeered at his folly. The summer zephyrs played past it, and it was silent; the autumn winds swept it, but it gave no sound. By and by, on a winter's night, when a tempest howled up the valley, the baron's harp hummed, hour after hour, with a strange unearthly melody, its deep tones rising and falling in the storm. So now the sinews of war have been strung, but there is a momentary pause and hush in the nation's heart—an expectancy and longing as if for some unspoken word, awful in the grandeur of its tone and promise. Soon, "the great winds of Jehovah" will sweep along the earth, and, as if to the music of millennial trumpets, the hosts of freedom will go forth to final victory. God speed the hour.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 012 026 656 1